

**JOINT STAFF REPORT  
WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1  
Columbia River Compact  
December 12, 2001**

<b>Purpose:</b> To review sturgeon and smelt stock status and consider non-Indian and treaty Indian fishing options.
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**TAC**

- This Fact Sheet was not reviewed by the TAC.
- Copies of the Joint Staff report concerning sturgeon and smelt were provided to the TAC for review prior to being mailed on November 26, 2001.

**MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

**Salmon**

- A multi-year Management Agreement for upriver spring chinook, summer chinook, and sockeye is in effect.
- All proposed fisheries are included in an ESA Section 7/10 Application that was submitted to the NMFS on November 3, 2000 and impacts on listed ESU's by proposed sturgeon and smelt fisheries are expected to be *de minimus*.
- An approved Biological Opinion on the multi-year agreement was received from the NMFS.

**Sturgeon**

- 2002 will be the sixth consecutive year in which Columbia River sturgeon fishery management is guided by a Joint State Agreement.
- The Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissions readopted most of the major tenets of the past Olympia Accord (1997-1999) for the 3-year period of 2000-2002.

<i>Major Tenets of 2000-2002 Sturgeon Fishery Management</i>	
✓	Commercial target seasons allowed, as necessary, to access allocation and maximize economic benefit consistent with conservation objectives for other species.
✓	Green sturgeon-only commercial seasons are not allowed; however, green sturgeon may be taken concurrently during other commercial seasons provided the green sturgeon catch does not exceed levels observed in past fisheries.
✓	Commercial size limits are 48-60 inches for white sturgeon and 48-66 inches for green sturgeon.
✓	Sport fishery regulations include; size limits of 42-60 inches for white sturgeon and green sturgeon, one sturgeon per day and ten sturgeon per year catch limits, and barbless hooks required.
✓	Sturgeon fisheries are managed on optimum sustained yield approach which, absent a significant update, results in an annual harvestable number of 50,000 white sturgeon for 2000-2002.
✓	The harvestable number is to be allocated 80% (40,000 fish) sport and 20% (10,000 fish) commercial.
✓	The plan may be modified in-season if new information suggests a change is warranted.

- Catch overages occurring during 2000 and 2001 will be applied to the 2002 catch guideline.
- Fisheries will be managed conservatively to ensure catches do not exceed the 3-year catch guideline set forth in the Joint State Agreement.

<i>White Sturgeon Catch Guidelines and Catches, 2000-2001</i>				
Year	Catch Guideline		Catch	
	Sport	Comm	Sport	Comm
2000	40,000	10,000	40,500	10,700
2001	40,000	10,000	41,000	9,400
Total	80,000	20,000	81,500	20,300

- For 2002 sport fisheries will be managed for a catch of 36,500 with catches not to exceed 38,500 and a commercial catch of 9,200 with catches not to exceed 9,700.

### ***Smelt***

- WDFW and ODFW have completed the Joint State Smelt Management Plan.
- During 2001-2002 smelt fisheries will be managed in accordance with the Joint State Smelt Management Plan.
- The Smelt Management Plan provides for three levels of fishing based on 1) parental run strength, 2) juvenile production, and 3) estimates of ocean productivity.

<i>Recommended Fisheries Contained in the Joint State Smelt Management Plan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Fishery recommendations apply to the January - March timeframe, otherwise permanent regulations remain in effect.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Level One</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Expectation of poor run or great uncertainty concerning expected abundance.</li> <li>✓ Commercial fisheries limited to one 12-24 hour fishing period per week for the Columbia and Cowlitz rivers.</li> <li>✓ Tributary sport fisheries would also consist of one 12-24 hour fishing period per week in the Cowlitz River.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Level Two</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Promising abundance and favorable productivity indices, but there is uncertainty about whether run is moderate or strong.</li> <li>✓ Commercial fisheries would consist of two or three day fishing periods in the Columbia and Cowlitz rivers.</li> <li>✓ Consider expansion of commercial fisheries into other lower Columbia River tributaries.</li> <li>✓ Tributary sport fisheries could be increased to two or three days per week.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Level Three</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Very positive indicators of strong abundance and productivity.</li> <li>✓ Commercial fisheries would consist of up to four days per week in the Columbia River and all lower Columbia River tributaries.</li> <li>✓ Tributary sport fisheries would be opened four to seven days per week.</li> </ul>

## WHITE STURGEON STOCK STATUS AND FISHERIES

### *White Sturgeon Stock Status*

- The lower Columbia River white sturgeon population is healthy.
- Indicators for sublegal (<42 inches) and oversize (>60 inches) populations remain very good.
- Abundance estimate for 2001 is not complete at this time.
- During 2001 catches totaled 50,400 white sturgeon (9,400 commercial, 41,000 sport) and 400 green sturgeon.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Sturgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1989-2000.</i>			
Year	Total Length Interval (inches)		
	42-48	48-60	42-60
1989	32,500	16,800	49,300
1990	26,100	12,000	38,100
1991	32,900	11,700	44,600
1992	59,900	8,700	68,600
1993	85,000	14,200	99,200
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A
1995	143,200	59,000	202,200
1996	131,700	33,500	165,200
1997	123,700	33,400	157,100
1998	161,600	24,700	186,300
1999	116,800	17,600	134,400
2000	119,200	17,000	136,200

### *Winter Commercial Fishery*

- The 2001 fishery began with ten 30-hour target sturgeon fishing periods occurring between January 8, 2001 and February 9, 2001.
- The 2001 winter fishery concluded with six salmon fishing periods (15-42 hours) occurring between February 26, 2001 and March 9, 2001.
- A total of 3,166 white sturgeon and 5,445 spring chinook were landed during 2001 winter fisheries.
- An estimated 87% (2,745 fish) of the white sturgeon and 1% (71 fish) of the spring chinook landed during the winter season were caught during target sturgeon fishing periods.

### *2002 Commercial Winter Season Recommendation*

Mon Jan 7 Noon	-	Tue Jan 8 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 10 Noon	-	Fri Jan 11 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Jan 14 Noon	-	Tue Jan 15 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 17 Noon	-	Fri Jan 18 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Jan 21 Noon	-	Tue Jan 22 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 24 Noon	-	Fri Jan 25 6PM	(30 hrs)
Mon Jan 28 Noon	-	Tue Jan 29 6PM	(30 hrs)	Thu Jan 31 Noon	-	Fri Feb 1 6PM	(30 hrs)

**Area:** Zones 1 - 5.

**Gear:** 9" minimum and 9-3/4" maximum mesh size restrictions.

**Allowable Sales:** Adipose fin-clipped salmon and sturgeon.

**Sanctuaries:** Grays River, Elokommin -A, Abernathy Creek, Gnat Creek, Cowlitz River, Kalama -A, Lewis -A, Washougal River, and Sandy River sanctuaries.

**Expected Catch:** 1,500 - 2,500 white sturgeon  
 ≤ 50 spring chinook  
 ≤ 2 upper Willamette wild mortalities  
 7 winter steelhead

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
J		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████	
A	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
N		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████	
U	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
A		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████	
R	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Y		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████		Noon ██████████	6 PM ██████████	
	27	28	29	30	31	1	

- Staff will monitor weekly landings and season adjustments will be considered at future Compact hearings as needed.
- Additional winter season sturgeon fishing periods will be considered at the January 31, 2001 Compact hearing.
- Salmon target seasons typically begin sometime after mid-February.

<i><b>RATIONALE</b></i>	
✓	Fishery is designed to maximize economics while minimizing handle of chinook and steelhead.
✓	Winter season structure initially developed in 1997 with input from commercial fishing industry representatives.
✓	Season structure similar to successful seasons in place during 1997-2001.
✓	Past fisheries have been well accepted by the commercial industry and conducive to good marketing situations.
✓	Season allows access to portion of commercial white sturgeon catch guideline while allowing industry opportunity to modify sturgeon fishing schedule for the remainder of 2002.

### ***Sport Sturgeon Fishery***

- Modifications to the currently adopted 2002 fishing season are necessary to remain within catch guidelines.
- Public meetings will be held in January with constituents who represent a cross-section of the sturgeon angling public to discuss modifications to the currently adopted season.
- Based on the results of these meetings and the need to manage for the 36,500 catch guideline, the Joint Staff will develop fishery recommendations for adoption at the January 31, 2002 Compact hearing.

<i><b>Current 2002 Season</b></i>	
Area:	Columbia River below Bonneville Dam
Dates:	January 1-December 31, 2002
Catch Limits:	1 sturgeon per day and 10 sturgeon per year
Size Limits:	42-60" for both white and green sturgeon
Expected Catch:	Up to 44,000 white sturgeon 100 green sturgeon

## **SMELT STOCK STATUS AND FISHERIES**

### ***Stock Status***

- Population estimates are not available, but relative annual abundance may be indexed using commercial landings data.
- Adult production in Columbia River tributaries, as indexed by commercial landings data, was poor for 1994-1999.
- Commercial landings data indicate a moderate improvement in adult production in 2000 and a large increase to adult production in 2001.
- Spawning success in 2001, as indexed by larval sampling, was excellent in the mainstem Columbia River and several tributaries, including the Cowlitz River.
- 1998 and 1999 parent broods for this year's return were small.
- Similar to the 2001 return, improved ocean conditions are expected to benefit smelt returns in 2002.

### ***2000-2001 Commercial Fishery***

- The standard 7 days per week season occurred from December 1 - 31, 2000.
- A Level One fishery, consisting of one 18-hour period (3AM-9PM every Wednesday) per week, was initially adopted for three months from January 3, 2001 through March 28, 2001.
- Based on the high CPUE in the commercial fishery and excellent sport catches in the Cowlitz River the fishery was expanded to include an additional 18-hour fishing period (3AM-9PM every Monday) per week from March 12, 2001 through March 26, 2001, consistent with Level Two fisheries described in the Joint State Smelt Management Plan.
- The Cowlitz River was open to commercial smelt fishing for one 12-hour fishing period per week during January 1 through March 10, 2001; two 12-hour fishing periods per week during March 11 through March 18, 2001; and three 12-hour fishing periods per week during March 19 through March 31, 2001.
- Commercial landings totaled 177,400 pounds from the Columbia River and 154,300 from the Cowlitz River.

### ***2001-2002 Columbia River Commercial Fishery***

- Scheduled to be open seven days per week effective December 1, 2001 through March 31, 2002 as per permanent regulations.
- Landings to date have been small to non-existent with few fishers participating.
- Water temperatures are warm for this time of year. Temperature at Bonneville Dam was 50° during the first eight days of December.
- The Columbia River above the mouth of the Willamette River is clear with a visibility of seven feet measured at Bonneville Dam on December 9, 2001.

<b><i>2001-2002 Mainstem Columbia Commercial Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i></b>	
<b>Season:</b>	Close ongoing 7-day per week fishery effective Tuesday January 1, 2002 and adopt a Level 2 fishery consisting of two 18-hour weekly fishing periods during January 1, 2002 through March 31, 2002.
<b>Open Days:</b>	Monday and Wednesday
<b>Hours:</b>	3 AM to 9 PM
<b>Gear:</b>	Gill net, dip nets, or trawls as per permanent regulations.
<b>Participants:</b>	Columbia River commercial fishers with appropriate licenses and legal gear.

- Effort is expected to remain similar to recent years.
- Fishery will be closely monitored inseason and modified as needed through emergency or scheduled Compact hearings.

<b><i>RATIONALE</i></b>	
✓	Abundance and productivity indices support Level Two fisheries.
✓	Proposed season is consistent with Level Two fisheries described in the Joint State Smelt Management Plan.
✓	Provides opportunity to collect abundance index data that is comparable to past years and collect biological data such as age composition, sex ratios, and average size.
✓	Extension through March allows for improved data collected to estimate annual abundance.
✓	Similar to season that was in place during March, 2001.

### ***2001-2002 Washington Tributary Fisheries***

- WDFW adopted permanent regulations that closed all Washington Columbia River tributaries to both commercial and sport smelt fishing in May of 1999.
- WDFW will announce their intentions regarding sport and commercial smelt fishing regulations for all Washington tributaries.

### **TREATY INDIAN FISHERIES**

- Under permanent Compact rules, a treaty Indian commercial setline season occurs noon January 1, 2002 - noon January 31, 2002.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet in January to review stock assessment updates and management options including harvest guidelines, and to make recommendations for subsequent Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2002.
- The report from the SMTF will be presented at the January 31, 2002 Compact Hearing.
- The current size limits for sturgeon caught for tribal subsistence and commercial purposes are 4-5 feet.

### **NEXT COMPACT HEARING**

- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for January 31, 2002 at 10 am at the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver, Washington to update salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, smelt, and shad stock status, consider fishing options in the mainstem Columbia River and Select Areas, and consider miscellaneous regulations for Columbia River commercial fisheries.
- A Joint State meeting to consider spring chinook sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and modifications to the currently adopted sport fishery in the lower Columbia River is scheduled to occur immediately following the January 31, 2001 Compact hearing.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
December 12, 2001